

BARBARA A. MIKULSKI  
20 DISTRICT, MARYLAND

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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
March 6, 1981

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The Honorable Alexander Haig  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Haig:

I am writing to ask for your active assistance in obtaining the release from jail of Rodolfo Juan Begnardi, who has been imprisoned by Argentine authorities for over five years.

In 1975, Begnardi, who was active in the legal trade union movement in Argentina, was arrested by police. Though never charged with a crime, Begnardi was held incommunicado for three years in Resistencia Prison. In 1978, he was transferred to the notorious Casseros Prison where exceptionally bad conditions have led to suicides by various prisoners.

Although the Argentine authorities have refused for five years to put Begnardi on trial, grant him permission to leave the country or even charge him with a crime, they have continued to subject him to inhumane conditions. Under Article 23 of the Argentine Constitution, every political prisoner has the right to go into exile as an alternative to continued imprisonment. The U.S. Government issued a certificate of eligibility to Begnardi; nevertheless, his application to leave has been rejected SIX times by the Argentines.

Rodolfo Begnardi's wife, Nora Begnardi, was permitted to leave Argentina last year and has been living in my Congressional district in Baltimore. I have been in contact with Mrs. Begnardi and have heard about the horror which her husband has undergone.

It is my hope that that our Government will make very clear to Argentina that Rodolfo should be allowed to leave Argentina and reunite with his wife. Our concern may be underlined by the fact that his wife is now a resident of the United States.

At the end of March, the current leader of Argentina will step down and Roberto Viola will assume the Presidency. Traditionally, when new leaders take over in Argentina, they issue pardons for various political prisoners. It is my hope that Rodolfo will be one of those prisoners included in the list of pardons. From March 15-18, President-designate Viola will be visiting Washington and I urge you to raise the issue of Rodolfo during his trip.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)  
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny  
Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☐ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Declassify on \_\_\_\_\_ Reason \_\_\_\_\_

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The Honorable Alexander Haig

I appreciate your assistance on this issue of great importance to me. Please don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Barbara A. Mikulski*

Barbara A. Mikulski  
Member of Congress

BAM:tsk